

CRYSTAL CREEK PRESERVE

Three years ago, the owners of Crystal Creek and Spring Creek Ranches embarked on a bold new way of “doing business” in the State of Idaho. The Crystal Creek Preserve combines fish and wildlife conservation, livestock ranching, and residential development on 1820 acres in Blaine County, Idaho. This new approach is one that may serve as a model for the future of conservation in the west.

The Crystal Creek Preserve is located in Blaine County, Idaho, just south of the town of Bellevue in the beautiful Wood River Valley.

This project will restore and enhance stream and wetland habitat in a critical area for fish and wildlife, while maintaining ranching and farming practices. A recipient of *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act* (ARRA) funding, this project has also provided employment opportunities.

Fish and wildlife conservation on the properties will be maximized by restoring stream, wetland and riparian habitat, and also by adjusting livestock and other agricultural uses to maintain healthy habitat.

Habitat restoration can be costly. Many working ranches and farms can not enter into such ventures, but Crystal Creek Ranch applied creativity to find the means to do so. Their dedication to improving the health of the land, and the livelihoods of Idahoans, allowed this project to become a reality.



STREAM AND WETLAND RESTORATION PROJECT
BLAINE COUNTY, IDAHO

The stream and wetland restoration was estimated to cost \$3.5 million. Agricultural income alone could not fund the project. That's when the landowners began to think “outside the box.”

In areas of the property with limited fish and wildlife habitat value, the owners believed residential development could supplement the income needed to successfully implement habitat conservation at Crystal Creek Preserve.

An expert team of fish, wildlife, and stream restoration experts developed a comprehensive wetland and stream restoration plan for the

property. Technical assistance was provided by Ducks Unlimited, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's *Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program*, and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game.

The wetland restoration phase was funded in 2009 with private landowner funds, and *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act* “Stimulus” dollars through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's *Partners Program*.

The wetland project's scope is extensive: On 1820 acres, over 150 acres around 13 wetland basins will be restored using direct on-the-ground habitat restoration, including wetland basin excavation and vegetation planting. Additionally, 596 acres of wetland habitat, 793 acres of upland habitat and 161 acres of riparian habitat will be “passively” enhanced or restored by changes in land use such as livestock grazing and irrigation management. Crystal Creek's conservation leadership is exemplary.



What does this mean for Idaho's wildlife and lands?

Restored and enhanced habitats at Crystal Creek will benefit waterfowl and migratory birds, and a variety of sensitive species such as bald eagles, great blue herons, long-billed curlews, sandhill cranes, and trumpeter swans. Mammals such as deer, elk and moose will also benefit from the wetland and stream enhancement.

A permanent conservation easement will protect 1,384 acres of the property in perpetuity. A *Conservation Easement Management Plan* will guide habitat and agricultural management, and other land use such as recreation on the easement area.

The stream restoration phase, slated for completion in the next few years, will result in restoration of over 7 miles of spring creeks, including additional wetland and riparian habitat, benefiting trout and other aquatic species.

Without a doubt, Crystal Creek's long-term benefit to fish, wildlife and habitats will be a landmark achievement in one of Idaho's most treasured landscapes.

What does this mean for Idaho's economy?

The purpose of *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act* is to help stimulate economies across the nation. Rural communities, such as those in Blaine County, Idaho, stand to benefit economically from projects like this.

A substantial economic investment was made in Idaho's economy (\$959,832) with the Crystal Creek wetlands component (\$430,000 in Partners/ARRA funds and \$529,832 in private landowner funds).

The wetland restoration phase has employed heavy equipment operators, re-vegetation and environmental specialists, biologists and engineers.

Additionally, secondary businesses that will supply water control structures, pipe, fuel, and rock, and local food and lodging businesses will realize economic return.

Integration of healthy fish and wildlife habitat, viable livestock ranching, and sensible residential development not only makes conservation sense, it also makes economic sense.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

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